

Language, Resistance, & Liberation

Black Matters, SP17

Roadmap

- 1) Rethinking Literacy: A Dialogue
- 2) Literacy and Critical Pedagogy
- 3) MIT-Haiti Initiative

Writers

Paulo Freire

- Brazilian educator on critical pedagogy

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Donaldo Macedo

- Cape Verdean-American professor of English at UMass Boston

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Main Premises of Culture

1. Cultural processes are intimately connected with social relations, especially with class relations and class formations, with sexual divisions, with the racial structuring of social relations, and with age oppressions as a form of dependency.
2. Culture involves power and helps to produce asymmetries in the abilities of individual and social groups to define and realize their needs.
3. Culture is neither autonomous nor an externally determined field, but a site of social difficulties and struggles

Analyzing the Critical Pedagogy of “Rethinking Literacy”

Nothing is perfect!

“Literacy’s oral dimension is important even if it takes place in a culture like that of the United States, whose memory is preponderantly written, not oral like that of Africa” (Freire 34).

“What roles can black American discourse, women’s discourse, and the discourse of ethnic groups play in the emancipatory literacy process?” (Freire 36).

Using language as a form of resistance

The traditional approaches to literacy (academic, utilitarian, cognitive development, romantic) ignore the “role of language as a major force in the construction of human subjectivities” (Freire 103)

“The sad reality is that while education in Portuguese provides access to positions of political and economic power for the high echelon of African society, it screens out the majority of the masses, who fail to learn Portuguese well enough to acquire the necessary literacy level for social, economic, and political advancement” (Freire 104)

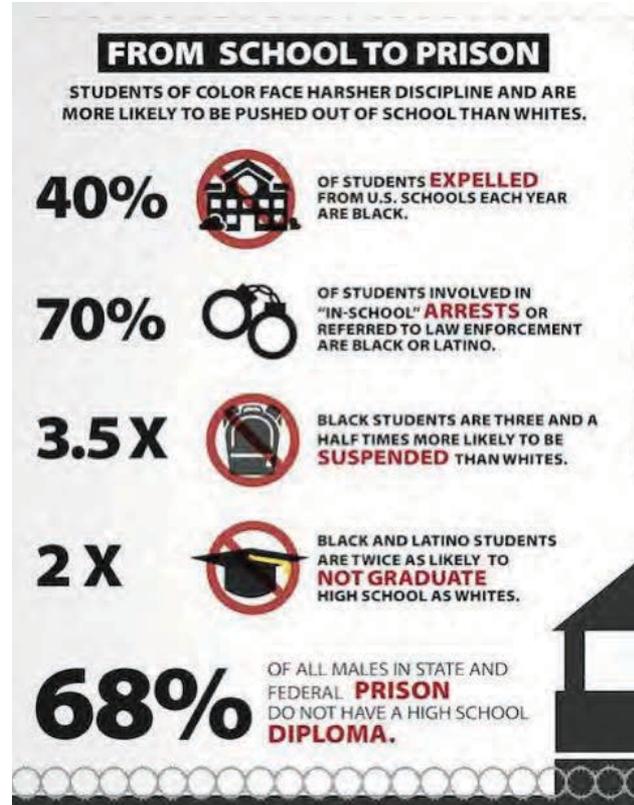
The language of the people allows an individual to liberate itself from the oppressive elite and learn to comprehend principles better in their native tongue

Oppression of language in the US

Kids on winning robotics team told to "go back to Mexico."



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The role of Emancipatory Literacy

Emancipatory literacy involves a plan to reconstruct new and more “democratic societies where educators and political leaders create a new school grounded in a new educational praxis, expressing different concepts of education consonant with the plan for the society as a whole” (Freire 108)

“An important feature of a new educational plan is the development of literacy programs rooted in an emancipatory ideology, where readers become ‘subjects’ rather than mere ‘objects’” (Freire 108)

Linguistic apartheid in Haiti

Virtually all schooling in Haiti is in French, not Kreyòl

- Based on false & oppressive conclusions that Kreyòl is a “still-emerging” language
- Consider education in Finland
- LKM K-10 school

Results in systemic & institutionalized socio-economic inequality

MIT-Haiti Initiative

Image of Haitian school removed
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Produces and provides STEM education in Kreyòl

Includes workshops about active learning strategies

Funded by a grant from the US National Science Foundation

Uses Kreyòl as the primary language of teaching for all levels of education

- Affirms students' culture and backgrounds
- Equalizes education due to all students being fluent in Kreyòl
- Levels the playing field for socio-economic movement

What we can do to #stayWOKE

- “Language is a mediating force of knowledge; but it is also knowledge itself” (Freire 36).
- A critical pedagogy around language: how do both oppressed and oppressing groups construct a “language” (in their own language) to communicate their experiences?

Questions

1. How have our understandings of literacy evolved in response to the internet, unprecedented global integration, and increased pressure to preserve human rights? For example, what does it mean that schools repress the development of subjectivity but do largely ensure literacy? How can modern notions of literacy evolve to address phenomena such as the proliferation of fake news?
2. Knowing that people grow up in a type of literacy (traditional or emancipatory), what are the pros/cons of your type of literacy? Explain why we should move either towards or away from an emancipatory literacy.
3. From your personal experiences or what you have seen and read about, how do you think we can improve students' experiences and confidence through intentional language use in schools?

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